

## **District moves forward with implementation of International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program**

by Dr. Debra Bowers, Superintendent of Schools

When Governor Pawlenty visited us at the St. Louis Park High School last August, he asked our staff: What can we do to prepare our students to take more rigorous coursework?

Meryll Page, a teacher in our high school International Baccalaureate (IB) program said she believed that bringing the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) to our elementary schools is critical in providing enriching opportunities to our children at younger ages to allow them to be interested and ready to take more rigorous courses.

I agree, and that's why I'm pleased to tell you that the school board unanimously approved a resolution in support of PYP last month. As a result, the district will move forward with its application and implementation process.

We began discussing this option over a year ago. I heard repeatedly from parents about the need to prepare our students to compete in a world marketplace. To accomplish that, we in the educational system need to do the best job that we can in creating innovators and people who can think creatively. And this is what we see in IB.

The high school IB diploma program is an international, academically rigorous program for self-selected students. PYP provides enriched curriculum that meets the needs of all students, including at-risk learners. As a primary school becomes a PYP site, the PYP curriculum is taught to all students. It's designed to foster the development of the whole child (social, physical, emotional, cultural and intellectual) while giving an international perspective.

"PYP seeks to develop students who are inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk takers, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open minded, well-balanced and reflective; in short, St. Louis Park students," Peter Hobart Principal Frank Johnson told board members last month. "In my opinion, PYP is about what Peter Hobart is already about. It's about excellence for all students. In addition, it makes us part of a terrific international network and brings our students a foreign language."

Right now we are planning, training and writing curriculum at Aquila and Peter Hobart in preparation for application submission due May 1, 2006. We will begin implementation of the PYP at Aquila and Peter Hobart in the fall of 2006. Susan Lindgren and Cedar Manor will follow. By fall of 2007, all of our primary students will have world language instruction. It takes several years to become an accredited IB school. All teachers get involved in the process of revising curriculum. All IB curriculum meets state standards.

PYP is not just about curriculum, but also developing a student profile with elements such as cooperation, commitment, respect, tolerance, curiosity and integrity. The PYP

philosophy is that positive attitudes towards people, the environment, and learning should be developed within students. Students should participate in thoughtful and appropriate action. They choose, act and reflect. It's a right and a duty.

PYP is not just an add-on, it takes the curriculum we already have and hones it. It teaches students not just to know facts and figures but how they relate to other facts and figures.

“IB is based on 40 years of research and proven practices. It takes the best of what's out there. It has been proven effective in settings with a diverse population. It's a reshaping of what we've been teaching in a way that will inspire teachers, students and families to get excited about a common goal. It's rigorous and relevant. We have relevant curriculum already, but now we'll go even deeper and be even more intentional,” said Director of Curriculum and Instruction Barbara DeMaster.

It connects us to a whole world of people who want to share their world with us, and that's powerful. Bookmark this website now and visit us often to stay connected to us, and keep abreast of the progress we make in implementing the PYP at Aquila and Peter Hobart.